

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

UNCLAS STATE 165802

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PN, PQ

SUBJECT:H.R. 7425 - CANAL ZONE DELEGATE TO HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

REF: PANAMA 4124

1. DEPARTMENT AWARE CONTENTS H.R. 7425, AND WAS REQUESTED
BY HOUSE COMMITTEE ON MERCHANT MARINE AND FISHERIES TO GIVE
ITS VIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON CONTENTS OF BILL. MAIN
POINTS OF DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE FOLLOW:

A) BILL WOULD BE DETRIMENTAL TO INTERESTS OF U.S. CITIZENS
WORKING IN CZ. SINCE U.S. CITIZENS WORKING IN CZ CAN
MAINTAIN THEIR LEGAL PERMANENT RESIDENCES IN THEIR
HOME STATE, THEY CAN VOTE BY ABSENTEE BALLOT IN U.S.
FEDERAL ELECTIONS AND HAVE VOTING REPRESENTATION IN
HOUSE. HOWEVER IF CONGRESS PASSES LEGISLATION TO MAKE
U.S. CITIZENS LIVING IN CZ PERMANENT RESIDENTS OF THE
ZONE FOR PURPOSES OF ELECTING A NON-VOTING DELEGATE TO
THE HOUSE, THIS CZ VOTING RESIDENCY WOULD SUPERCEDE
THEIR VOTING RESIDENCY IN THEIR HOME STATE, AND LOWER
THE QUALITY OF THEIR REPRESENTATION IN THE HOUSE. SUCH
LEGISLATION WOULD, ALSO, HAVE THE EFFECT OF STRIPPING
THEM OF THEIR RIGHT TO VOTE FOR ELECTORS FOR PRESIDENT
AND VICE PRESIDENT.

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B) BILL WOULD NOT BE IN BEST INTEREST OF U.S.-PANAMA RELA-

TIONS. U.S. HAS CONSISTENTLY RECOGNIZED SINCE 1904 CZ IS PANAMANIAN TERRITORY OVER WHICH U.S. EXERCISE JURISDICTION BY TREATY RIGHTS. SHOULD H.R. 7425 BE ADOPTED, PANAMA WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY VIEW IT AS AN OVERT ASSERTION OF U.S. SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE CZ, AND, AS SUCH, AN AFFEONT TO PANAMANIAN SENSITIVITIES.

2. FYI: H.R. 7425 NOW SITTING IN COMMITTEE ON MERCHANT MARINE AND FISHERIES, AND IS NOT SCHEDULED FOR COMMITTEE REVIEW IN FORSEEABLE FUTURE. DEPARTMENT WILL KEEP EMBASSY INFORMED OF DEVELOPMENTS. INGERSOLL

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